

Indeed, in the momentary hubbub of this
planet, it is
hard to conceive the soundlessness of the
universe that
engulfs it, or the strangeness of a lunar
landscape, such as
ours too will become, where (could we live a
moment in
its airlessness) we might watch some stony
avalanche
sweep down a mountain side without a
whisper. For
even Echo, divine though she be, dies where
air is not.

It would be pleasant to compile an
Anthology of
Silence—from Homer's pictures of hghdy-
falling snow
or windless starlight down to the Cupid of
Ausonius, in
the twilight of the pagan gods, crucified in
that garden of
Proserpine:

later arundineasque comas gravidumque papaver,
Et tacitos sine labe lacus, sine murmure rivos;
Amid, the tresses of die rushes, and the poppy's
heavy head,
And fleckless meres whose voice is still, and
streams whose
murmur's dead:

and again from the beginnings of our own
literature,
'the Fight at Finnsburg', with its raven
hovering sombre
and mute above the battlefield, on to Malory
and the *
silence of the mere where Excalibur was
cast away.
There, too, would follow Sidney's quietly
climbing
moon; Webster's dying Flamineo, 'in the way
to study a
long silence'; Chapman invoking the dumb
midnight
sky:

All ye peaceful regents of the night,
Silently gliding exhalations,
Languishing winds, and murmuring falls of
water;

the young Donne creeping to his mistress,
with even the

rustling of his silks subdued; Traherne's
childish terror
in the lonely field at evening, and Vaughan's
soft-stepping
night, and Cowper's days stealing as
noiselessly upon him
as Lear's horsemen shod with felt; Pope's
creeping
Maeotis in the stillness of its freezing steppe,
and Crabbe's